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ABSTRACT

This illustrated children's book describes the American Indian powwow, an important element of contemporary Native American life in the United States and Canada. The main character of the book, Tess, is a Native American. She explains to her classmates at school about the origin and meaning of the powwow and also about the wars between the Indians and the White men. During the wars the soldiers forced the Indians to move off their lands onto reservations. Tess explains that Indians have powwows to celebrate being Indians. She also shows her classmates the traditional dress for powwows including a beaded headband, beaded moccasins, and a beautiful shawl. After teaching her classmates how to perform the traditional Indian round dance, Tess invites them on a field trip to a powwow. Tess' classmates dance the round dance with the Indian dancers. The children have fun and Tess is happy and proud that she has shared a special part of her Indian heritage with her classmates. (LP)

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A TRIP TO A POW WOW

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Illustrations by Anne C. Brook

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For Tess Nashone, Hayley Kachine, and Tara Tsaile
Three girls who love the Pow Wow

Show and Tell

Tess woke up with a big smile on her face. She was happy. It was Friday. She could hardly wait to go to school.

One by one each student stood in front of the class. The boys and girls shared their hobbies with each other. Tom showed his boats. Emma showed her puppets. Sally played her flute.

Tess knew that soon it would be her turn for show and tell. She was very excited.

"Now we will hear from Tess," Ms. Sherrill said.

Tess walked to the front of the room with a large brown bag in her arms. Facing the class, she reached into the bag.

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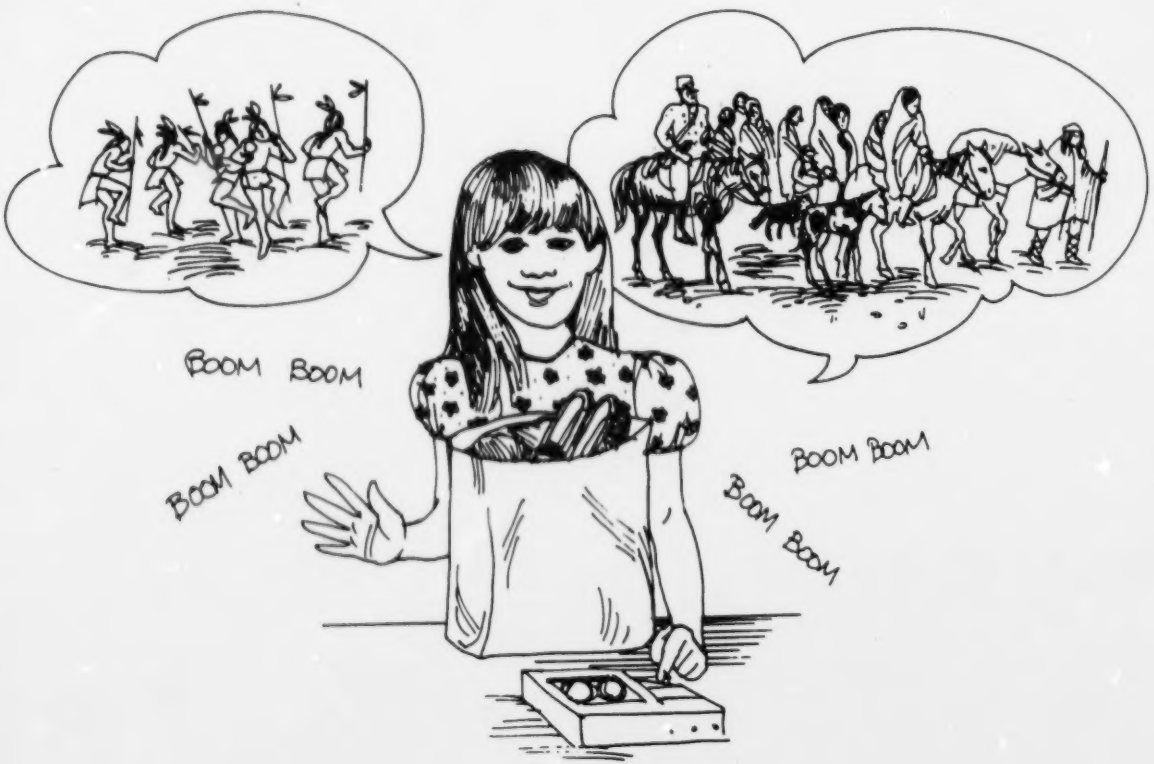
"I want to play some American Indian music," Tess said as she pulled a tape recorder out of her bag. "It is the music played at Indian Pow Wows today."

Tess turned on the tape recorder. Music began to drift through the room. Most of the students had never heard American Indian music before. The high-pitched singing and the steady beat of the drum were different from the music they sang. But soon the children were nodding their heads. They tapped their feet to the rhythm.


BOOM BOOM
BOOM BOOM
BOOM BOOM
BOOM BOOM

"Indians on the Great Plains started the Pow Wow," Tess explained. "They would gather together to dance and sing. Some of the Indian tribes that used to Pow Wow were the Kiowas, the Cheyennes, the Comanches, the Poncas, and the Sioux."

Tess told the children about the wars between the American Indians and the white men. During the wars the soldiers forced the Indians to move off of their lands. The Indians had to move onto certain lands called reservations.

POW WOW

Tess reached into her brown bag again. This time she pulled out a headband made out of tiny red, white, and blue beads. She placed it on her head. Tess also removed two beaded moccasins from the bag. She put them on her feet.

"At the Pow Wow, we dress like Indians did in the old days. When girls and women dance, we always wear shawls over our shoulders."

Now Tess pulled a beautiful blue shawl from her bag. It had an Indian design on it, painted in white. Long, silky fringes dangled from the edge of the shawl.

"Today Indians from all over the United States and Canada have Pow Wows," Tess said. "We celebrate because we are happy to be Indians."

The shawl was wrapped firmly around Tess' shoulders as she stood in front of the teacher's desk. She asked the students to stand up and to move their desks against the walls.

"I will teach you how to dance the Round Dance," Tess said. "Please stand in a big circle in the middle of the floor."

Ms. Sherrill and the students made a big circle. Everyone was excited about learning an Indian dance.

"Now take a small step to the left with your left foot," Tess explained. "Next take a small step with your right foot and place it close to your left foot."

In a very short time the children had learned the steps to the Round Dance. Tess turned the music on the tape recorder again. The children and their teacher danced around the floor. It was fun!

When the dance ended, Tess told the children the big news.

"Saturday night is our Pow Wow. You are all invited!" Ms. Sherrill looked surprised but happy.

"Students," Ms. Sherrill said, "Tess has invited you to attend a Pow Wow. I hope you will all be able to go with your mothers and fathers."

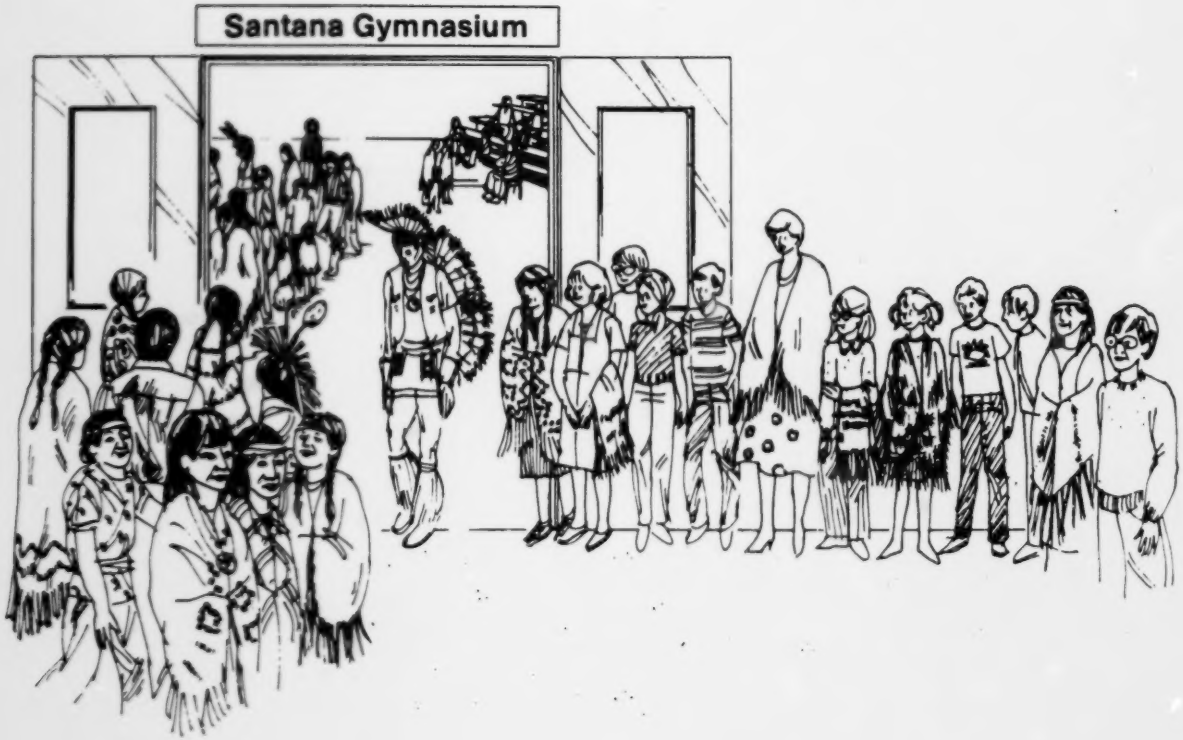
POW WO

Ms. Sherrill asked Tess if she had anything else to say.

"I hope you and your families will come to the Pow Wow," Tess said. "Now you know the Round Dance. You can join in the dancing. If you come to the Pow Wow, you can have fun the American Indian way!"

At the Pow Wow

Tess led her class into the Santana School gym. "Pow Wows are held everywhere in the United States," she said. "We even have Pow Wows here in California."


Santana Gymnasium

The students and their teacher sat down. Together they watched the Grand Entry. The dancers walked into the gym. The men and women wore beautiful costumes. So did the boys and girls. They all wore colorful feathers, beads, and cloth.

A man and a woman led the Indians. Tess explained that they were the head woman dancer and the head man dancer. They were followed by the head girl and head boy dancers. All of the dancers stood silently near the center of the dance floor.

A large round drum sat in the center of the dance floor. Around the drum sat several men.

"They will sing a Flag Song," Tess announced. "We are very patriotic people. The Flag Song honors the American flag and our nation." A slow, steady beat of the drum suddenly began. Everyone stood up. The Indian men sitting around the drum sang the Flag Song.

Next an old white-haired Indian man gave a blessing to the Creator. He asked for beauty, peace, and good will for everyone at the Pow Wow. He spoke in his language, the language of the Luiseño Indians from southern California. Then he spoke in English. When he was finished, the dancing began.

Indian men and women danced around the drum. The children did not understand the words of the song. The men sang their songs in the language of the Sioux Indians.

"Usually the dancers move around the drum in the direction of the sun. This is the same direction that the hands of a clock move," Tess explained to the children. "In some dances, though, they move in the other direction."

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The girls and women wore beautiful dresses made of yellow, red, black, or purple cloth. The dresses were trimmed with shells, beads, or lace. A few women wore buckskin leather dresses with long, dangling fringes. All of the women wore shawls over their shoulders. One of the children asked Tess why they wore the shawls.

"The women wear shawls to show respect," she answered. "It is an old Indian tradition."

Tess pointed out that some of the boys and men were dressed like Indians in the old days. These traditional clothes were decorated with eagle, hawk, or turkey feathers. Bones and shells were also sewn into the clothes.

"See some of the other men and boys?" Tess asked. "They are wearing outfits made out of very colorful feathers. The feathers were bought at Indian stores and trading posts. The outfits are made by the dancers. Often their friends and families help."

Some dancers make modern headresses or beaded barettes. The feathers which some dancers put on their backs are also made from modern materials.

"Right now the dancers are doing a horse-stealing dance," Tess said as the dancers whirled around the floor. The drummers sang a war song. The dancers' feet bounced high off of the floor. The children stared at the dancers. They were amazed!

Finally the Master of Ceremonies announced a Round Dance. All of the students had been waiting for this dance. Tess had taught them this dance in their classroom. Tess now led the class onto the dance floor to join the circle.

The boys and girls danced with the Indian dancers. Together they danced around and around in the direction of the sun. The girls wore the shawls which Tess had told them to bring. Smiling, the children traveled around the painted drum and the Indian singers.

When the dance ended, Tess led the class back to the seats.

"That was very nice!" Ms. Sherrill said. "I am so glad that Tess invited us to the Pow Wow."

Tess was happy and proud. She had shared a special part of her Indian heritage. She knew that the students would always remember that night. They would remember the fun and friendship. They would remember the Round Dance. Most of all, they would remember the Pow Wow.

The American Indian Pow Wow is an important element of contemporary Native American life in the United States and Canada. From California to New York and from Vancouver to Toronto, American Indians join in a celebration of singing, dancing, and drumming. In this book, meet Tess as she explains to her class the origin and meaning of the Pow Wow. After teaching her classmates how to Round Dance, Tess takes them on a field trip to a Pow Wow. This is a charming story for anyone interested in American Indians today. It is written by a Native American about Native Americans, and it provides an accurate portrayal of a significant aspect of contemporary Indian culture.

Richard Red Hawk has written extensively on Native American history, culture, and religion. He has written several children's books, including Grandmother's Christmas Story, A, B, C's: The American Indian Way, *and* Grandfather's Story of Navajo Monsters, *also published by Sierra Oaks.*

Anne C. Brook is a professional artist with a life-long interest in American Indian history, art, and culture. She is a superb graphics artist for the Media Technology Services at San Diego State University.

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